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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [FI](#)
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON FINLAND'S FALL SECURITY POLICY
DISCUSSIONS

REF: A. HELSINKI 715

[1](#)B. HELSINKI 753

Classified By: PolChief Gregory Thome, Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The GoF's Cabinet Committee on Foreign and Security Policy (UTVA) met with President Halonen Oct. 26 to continue internal deliberations regarding Finland's next steps in relation to Afghanistan/ISAF, EU Battlegroups, and the pending EU operation in Chad. Finland appears ready to send small numbers of trainers to Afghanistan to staff a "Nordic OMLT," as well as about 55 troops to Chad. At present, no concrete decisions on expanding other support to Afghanistan have yet been reached. Political movement on Afghanistan, in particular, remains somewhat difficult, as the main players within the governing coalition (as well as the President) are still not fully of one mind regarding exactly how much or how quickly Finland should ramp up its participation in peacekeeping and other security operations.
END SUMMARY.

UTVA Approves OMLT Participation and Troops for Chad

[1](#)2. (C) The Cabinet Committee on Foreign and Security Policy (UTVA), which is responsible for approving all major government foreign and security policy decisions, met with President Halonen Oct. 26. According to MFA and MOD sources, the UTVA produced three recommendations:

-- The UTVA identified the necessary financial resources and gave its approval for sending 10 military trainers to participate in a Nordic OMLT in Afghanistan, beginning in early 2008. Finland is eager to develop a "Nordic approach" to OMLTs by staffing them alongside Swedish and Norwegian trainers (Reftel B), and we view this as a good first step.

-- The UTVA identified resources and gave its approval to Finland's 221-troop contribution to the Nordic EU Battle Group, which will stand up January 1.

-- The UTVA identified resources and gave its approval for Finland to send 40 forward-deployable infantry peacekeepers, plus an additional 10-20 headquarters/logistics and support staff to Chad as part of the EU mission there. Current EU planning calls for troops to begin arriving by the end of November, but Finland's contributions will probably not arrive until December or early January.

[1](#)3. (C) According to Finnish law, these UTVA recommendations must now be submitted to parliament for consensus, and then returned to President Halonen for her final approval. While parliamentary and presidential approval for all three recommendations is likely, it could take up to six weeks.

No Other Decisions on Afghanistan

14. (C) According to foreign ministry contacts, the UTVA did not reach consensus on any other issues pertaining to Finnish participation in NATO/ISAF operation, aside from the OMLT. The GoF is engaged in a vigorous, unresolved internal debate over a series of recommendations from the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs regarding possible increases to Finland's military and development assistance contributions in Afghanistan. The UTVA discussed recommendations for increasing Finland's troop contributions in 2008. However, while the UTVA discussed possible Finnish troop increases and the question of leadership of the Finnish-Swedish PRT at Mazar-al-Sharif (reftels), it reached no conclusions. Conservative Party members of the UTVA (i.e., the Ministers of Defense, Foreign Affairs, and Finance) have for months been urging greater contributions, but their coalition partners (including the Prime Minister and the Foreign Trade and Development Minister) remain unconvinced about both the size of the recommended increases and the suggested timelines for implementation. As one senior MFA official with direct access to the UTVA's deliberations told PolChief, "The UTVA has no vision on this. The Foreign Minister has a vision, and others may. But the UTVA as a whole, no." He added that, in simplest terms, the Conservatives see it in Finland's national interest to do more in Afghanistan, while others feel the existing contributions are largely adequate.

Comment

15. (C) Even though the UTVA did not reach a decision this time on PRT leadership or on a troop increase, these questions remain under active consideration, and neither has been ruled out (as the local press mistakenly implied). The final decision on both issues will be subject to a drawn out process that depends heavily both on the domestic political

climate and on how bilateral negotiations with the Swedes proceed (Ref B). However, the OMLT concept has caught fire here -- as evidenced by the UTVA's relatively quick Oct. 26 decision -- and we hear clear hints from within the Ministries that this is an initiative of great potential. And as we have reported previously, the Embassy believes that Finland will ultimately find a way to make greater contributions in Afghanistan -- these painstaking internal political machinations notwithstanding. END COMMENT.

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